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## Book Reviews

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**The Religion of the New Testament.** By DR. BERNHARD WEISS, of the University of Berlin. Translated from the German by Professor George H. Schodde, Ph.D. New York: The Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1905. Pp. 431. \$2.

The present volume by Professor Weiss seeks to fill the gap which has been altogether too obvious between biblical and systematic theology. The older systematic theology was scriptural in that it built up its doctrines by the use of Scripture. Its methods, however, are seen to be too atomistic and too oblivious to the historical elements of a progressive revelation. Biblical theology, on the other hand, is so exclusively a historical discipline as to be indifferent to all normative processes. The systematic theologian is interested in truth, but has been weak in biblical theology. The biblical theologian has been interested in an objective presentation of the content of biblical thought in its historical relations, but has stopped short of such a presentation as always compels the assent of the reader. It is because of this divorce between the two disciplines that the modern theological movement has turned very largely from the Scriptures to psychology. As a result the teachings of the Bible have been disregarded, recast, or thrown out of perspective, almost as arbitrarily as by the older textual treatment.

There is no man better able to bring about a *rapprochement* of the two disciplines than Professor Weiss. His present volume is by no means a mere reworking of his great treatise on biblical theology. It is rather an attempt to present to thinking Christians the underlying unity in the New Testament thought. As he distinctly states in his preface, his purpose is not to "construct a theological system and then try to prove it from the Scriptures, but rather, to permit the Scriptures to speak for themselves." In pursuance of this purpose he has given us a work which is of singularly good perspective, and of real value as an epitome of the common material of the New Testament.

The real purpose of the religion of the New Testament, Professor Weiss very properly says, is to lead men to revere the fact of the incarnation and to imitate the Christ. In view of this conception of his task, one naturally turns to the author's treatment of Christology. Professor Weiss is not ready to accept the infancy narratives at their face-value (p. 192), and insists that it is not necessary to believe them in order to

have faith in the eternal divinity of Jesus. He will leave it to criticism to pronounce upon them, though a criticism, as he insists, more unprejudiced than that which is generally in evidence. He distinctly recognizes the limitations of Jesus, insisting that the gospels do not assign to him a higher knowledge than goes beyond the limits of his times and surroundings (p. 197). "Nothing is more certain than that the gospels do not ascribe to him perfect omniscience during his career on earth" (p. 198). But this recognition of the more than merely physical limitations of an incarnation is farthest possible from a denial of the divine nature in Jesus. This appears clearly in his treatment of the atonement. Without attempting to construct a systematic doctrine, Professor Weiss presents in a singularly illuminating way the place of sacrifice in the Old Testament religion and the parallelism between such a concept and that of the Pauline exposition of the death of Jesus.

Yet the book is hardly the work of the present day. In a singular way it dates, as the author says, from fifty years ago. With all his splendid exegetical and critical qualities, Professor Weiss does not write in the spirit of the historian. To appreciate this one has but to compare his work with that of Wernle. Each supplements the other, but neither is strictly constructive. To Professor Weiss the messianic and Logos interpretations of religion are not forms of thought, but actual realities (pp. 252 ff.), and he often fails to distinguish between the enveloping concept, or vocabulary, and the permanent truth. But this is the only serious general criticism one feels compelled to pass upon what is, in fact, a remarkably able work.

S. M.

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**The Old Testament Story.** By MARY W. BROWNSON, Vol. I, "The Patriarchal Age;" Vol. II, "The Development of the Nation;" Vols. III and IV in preparation. Boston: W. A. Wilde & Co. Each, \$0.75.

The writer of this series has undertaken, in a most devoted and conscientious spirit, the task of weaving into a continuous, and supposably more attractive and readable, form the history and story contained in the Old Testament, for the purpose of familiarizing young people with the facts of the history as a basis for future study. The author writes from the most conservative position, but, granting that, to intensify the anthropomorphic character of the conception of God presented in the second creation story, by speaking of him as "bending over the earth" and "fashioning creatures by his own hand," in a literal sense, seems almost